

# Northumbria Research Link

Citation: McDowell, Liz and Sambell, Kay (2010) Putting assessment for learning into practice. In: Repositioning Learner Assessment in Higher Education: HETAC [HE Training & Awards Council] National Conference, 14 May 2010, Dublin, Ireland.

URL:

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:  
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/2657/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)



**Northumbria  
University**  
NEWCASTLE



**UniversityLibrary**

# Putting Assessment for Learning into Practice

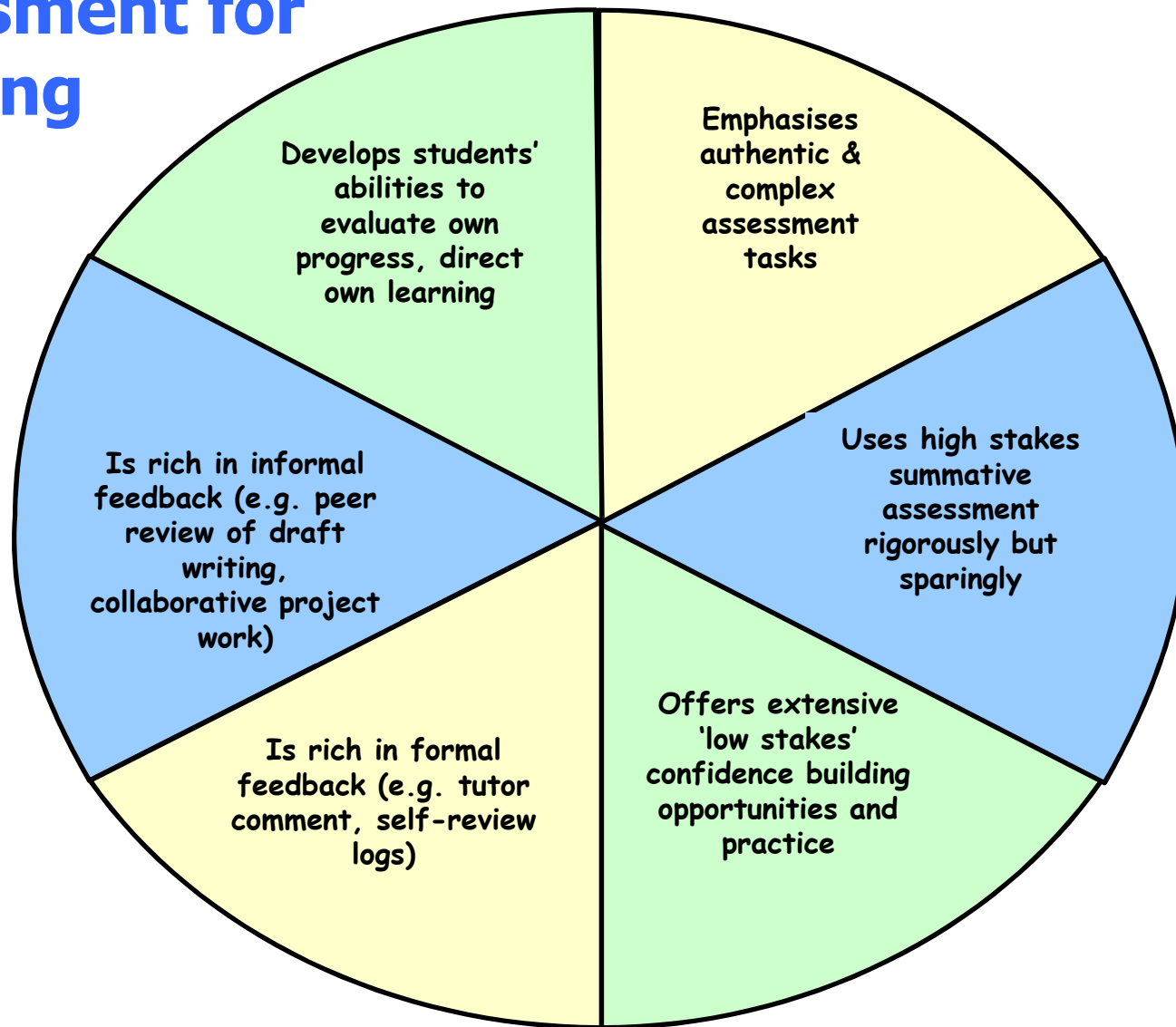


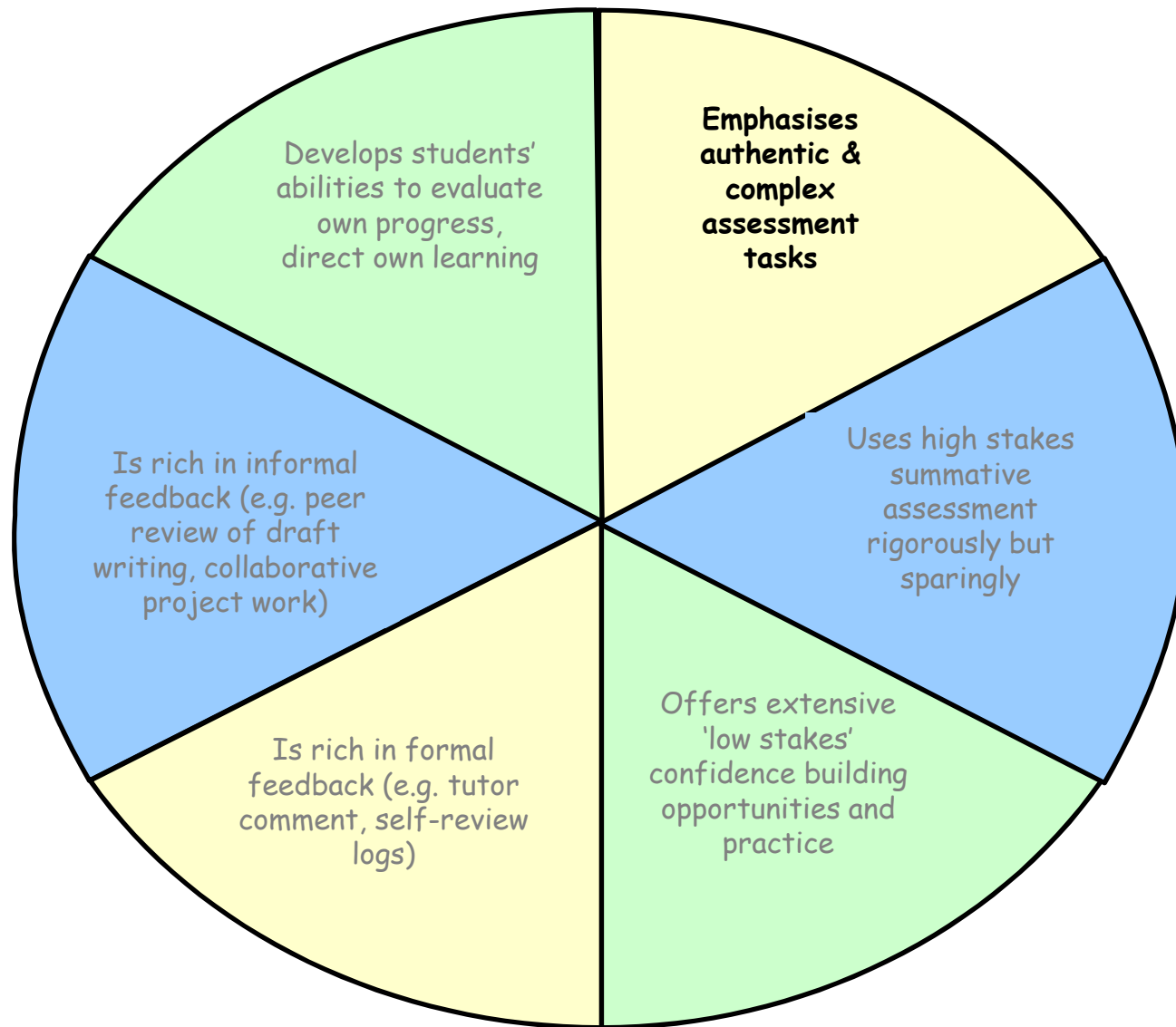
Liz McDowell

Kay Sambell

Northumbria University

# Assessment for Learning





# Emphasises authentic & complex assessment tasks

Assessment activities relevant to the subject or profession involving appropriate skills, knowledge and integrated understanding – rather than isolated bits of knowledge, regurgitation of information or rehearsals of routine procedures.

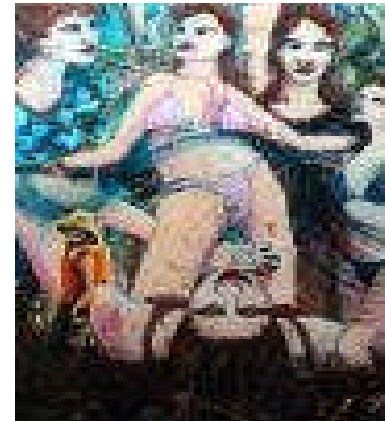
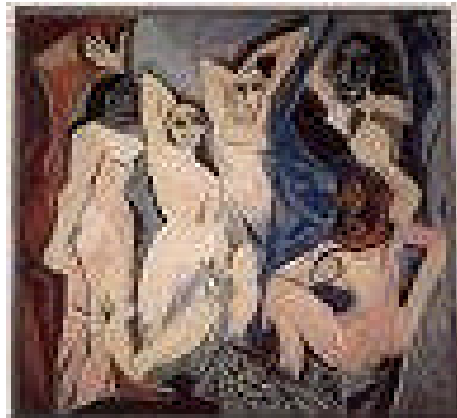
# An associated problem

“ With essays all you have to do is go to the library, look up the relevant books, and just copy down the relevant chapters in a different language”

“ You’re never going to need to know that kind of useless information”



One approach - Virtual Gallery



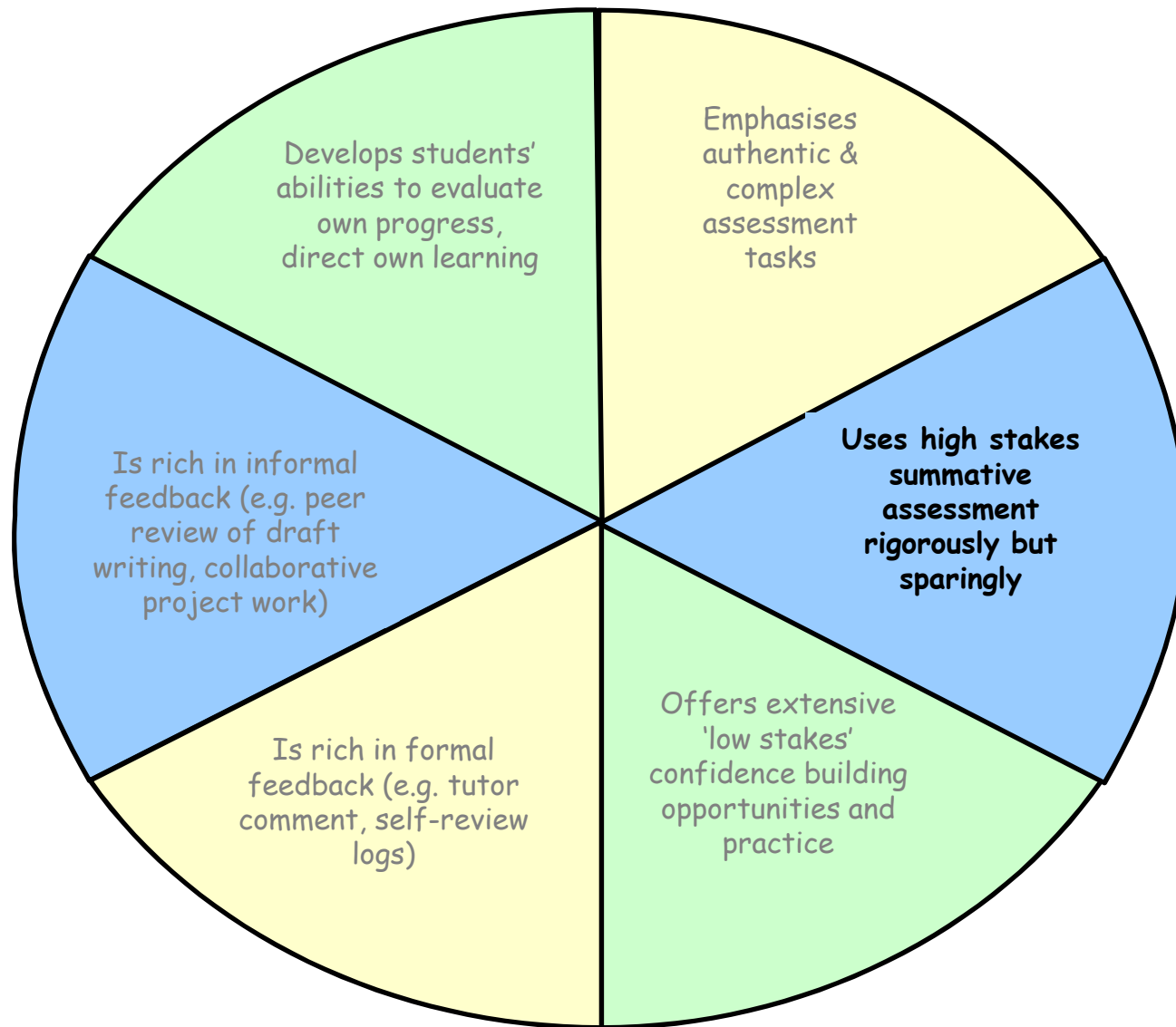
# Students' views

“It wasn't just a written assignment so it seemed more interesting”

“I am willing to work at it because I know it is going to be useful ”

“ It was your own thoughts about something specific that you chose to do and because I liked this web site so much it was ‘ Yes! I'm going to do that! “





Uses high stakes summative  
assessment rigorously but  
sparingly

Summative assessment is needed for a  
variety of purposes but should not be  
allowed to drive the whole teaching and  
learning process.

# An associated problem

“ Students will only do it if it's got marks attached!”

# One approach

- A series of practically-based tasks
  - Engineering workshop skills
  - Communication skills
- Discussion and review in class
- Students logs
- Summative assessment by 10 minute oral exam

# Lecturer views

“It’s a cost-effective use of our time – as long as we get organised!”



Offers extensive 'low stakes'  
confidence building  
opportunities and practice and  
is rich in informal feedback

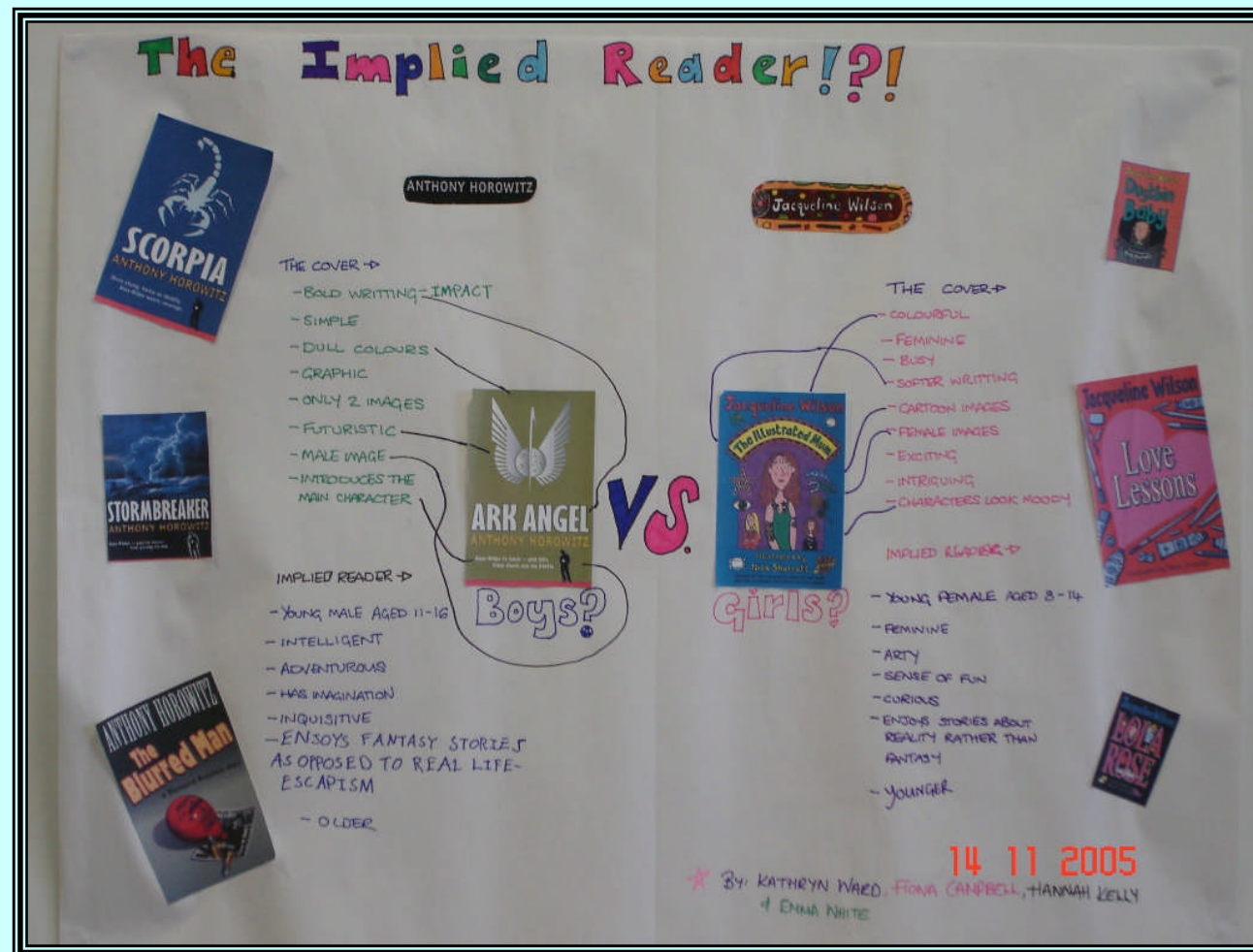
# Associated problems

“If you're sitting trying to take notes in a lecture it's a big rush. If you get a handout and the lecturer basically reads it out you don't learn anything from that: it doesn't go in”

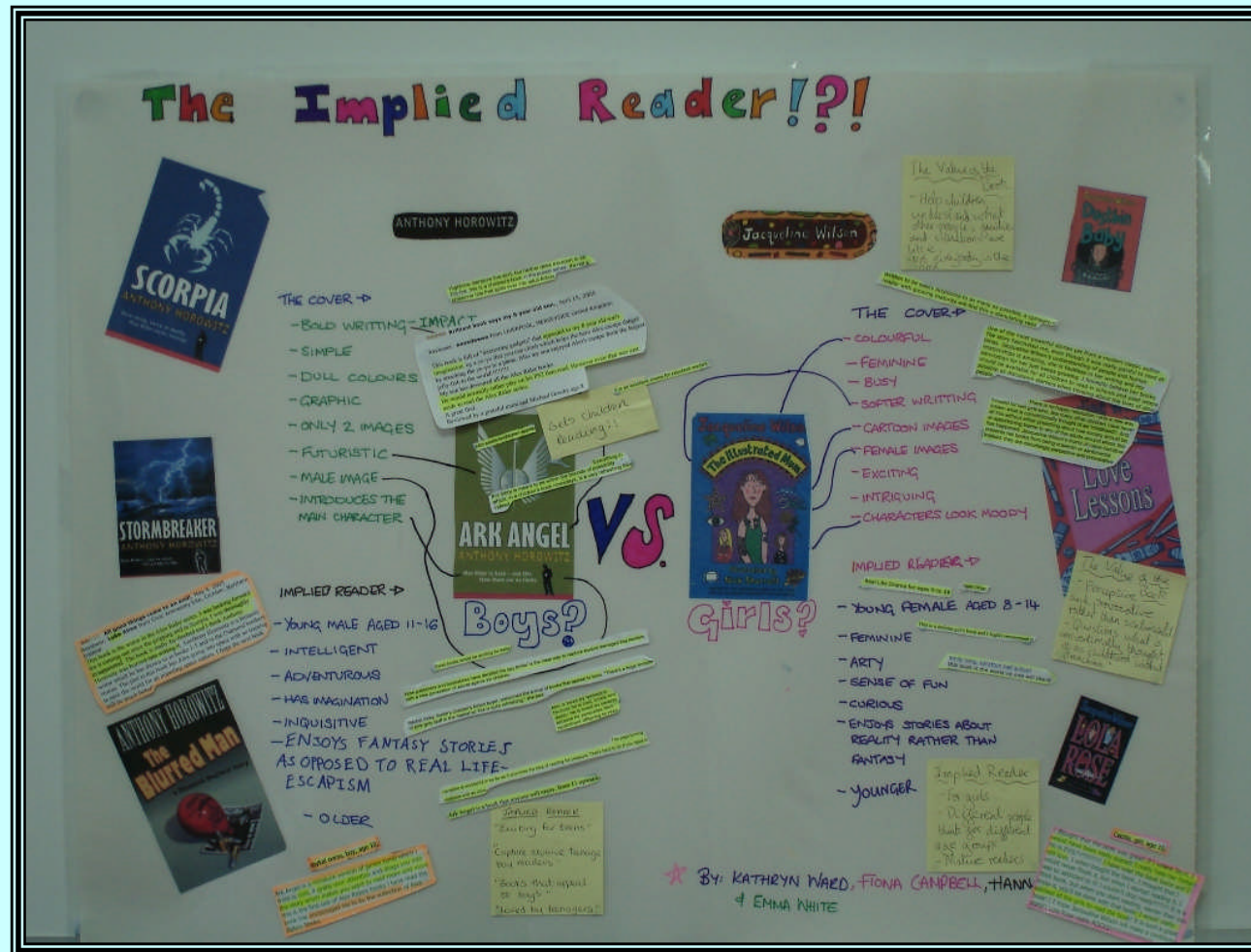
“It's annoying really with exams and things like that because you never really know [how you are doing]. I mean, it's like the assignments [for another unit]: we only just got them back on Thursday. You don't know what was good and what wasn't... “



# One approach: student-created posters



# Building theoretical 'layers' based on directed reading



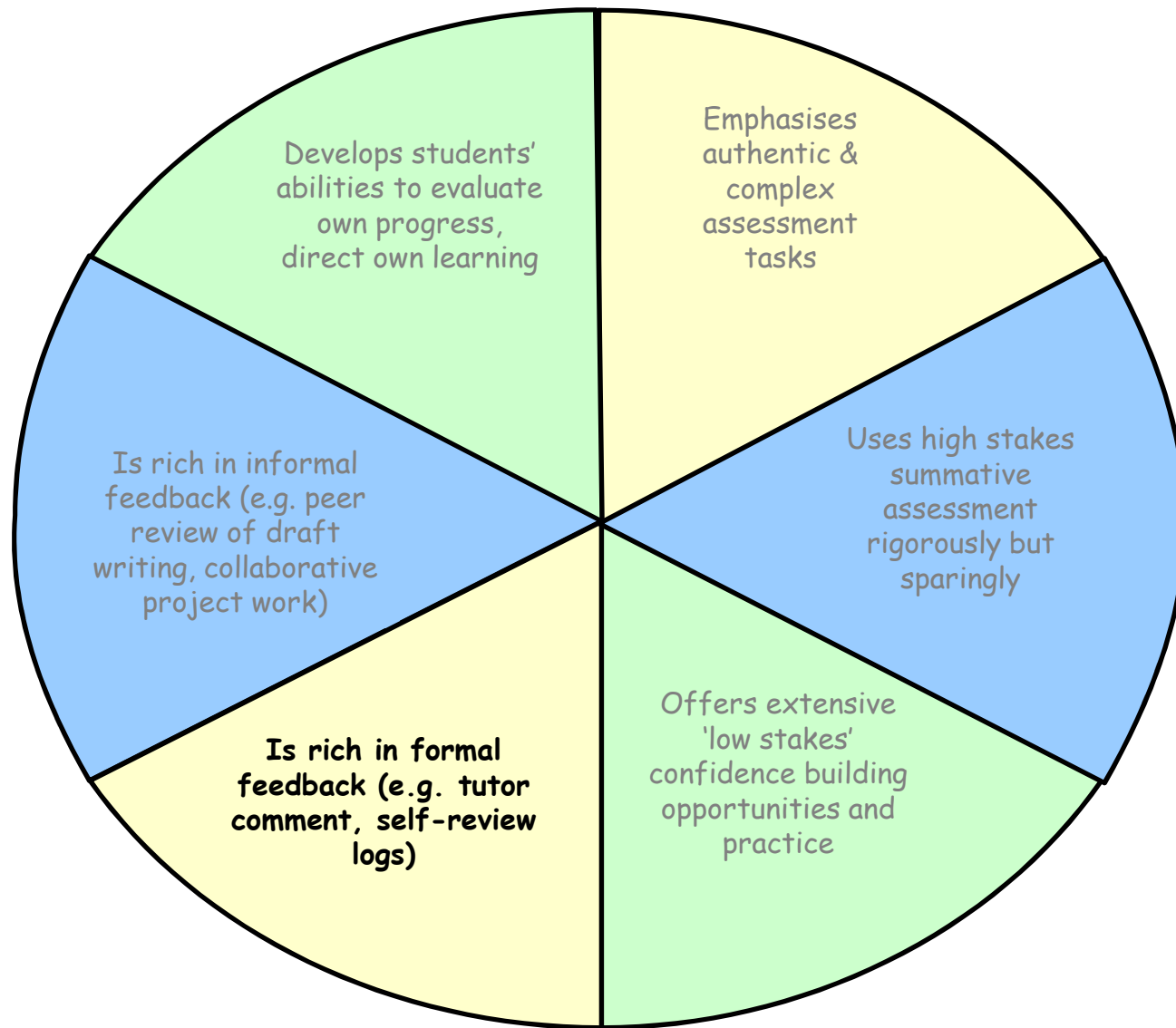
# Student's views

“You do wonder, in your own mind, if you’re getting the right idea, but I think it’s loads better to have a go before it really counts. If we hadn’t done these (tasks) I would have felt really scared about handing in ...work at the end of the semester. I would just panic, feeling lost. With this way, I’m not saying I can do it, but I feel like I know I’m going in the right direction, I know what I should be trying to do. And I know that my ideas are not completely stupid! “

# Informal feedback from peers

“ ‘Cause really when you're going around looking at other posters you're collaborating what you've done with other people to make sure that you've got the point. This is you re-affirming again.”

“ And you were checking that you were getting little bits, because, I mean, constant checking and re-affirming that seems to be happening in this lecture ...which is why I feel much more comfortable “



Is rich in formal feedback (e.g. tutor comment, self-review logs)

Formal feedback can be associated with assessed work at the summative or formative (e.g. draft) stages or with in-class activities.

# An associated problem

“When we got to over 100 students in the year group we couldn’t cope with the marking let alone give feedback”

“First year students are anxious about how they’re getting on”

# One approach

## Psychology practicals

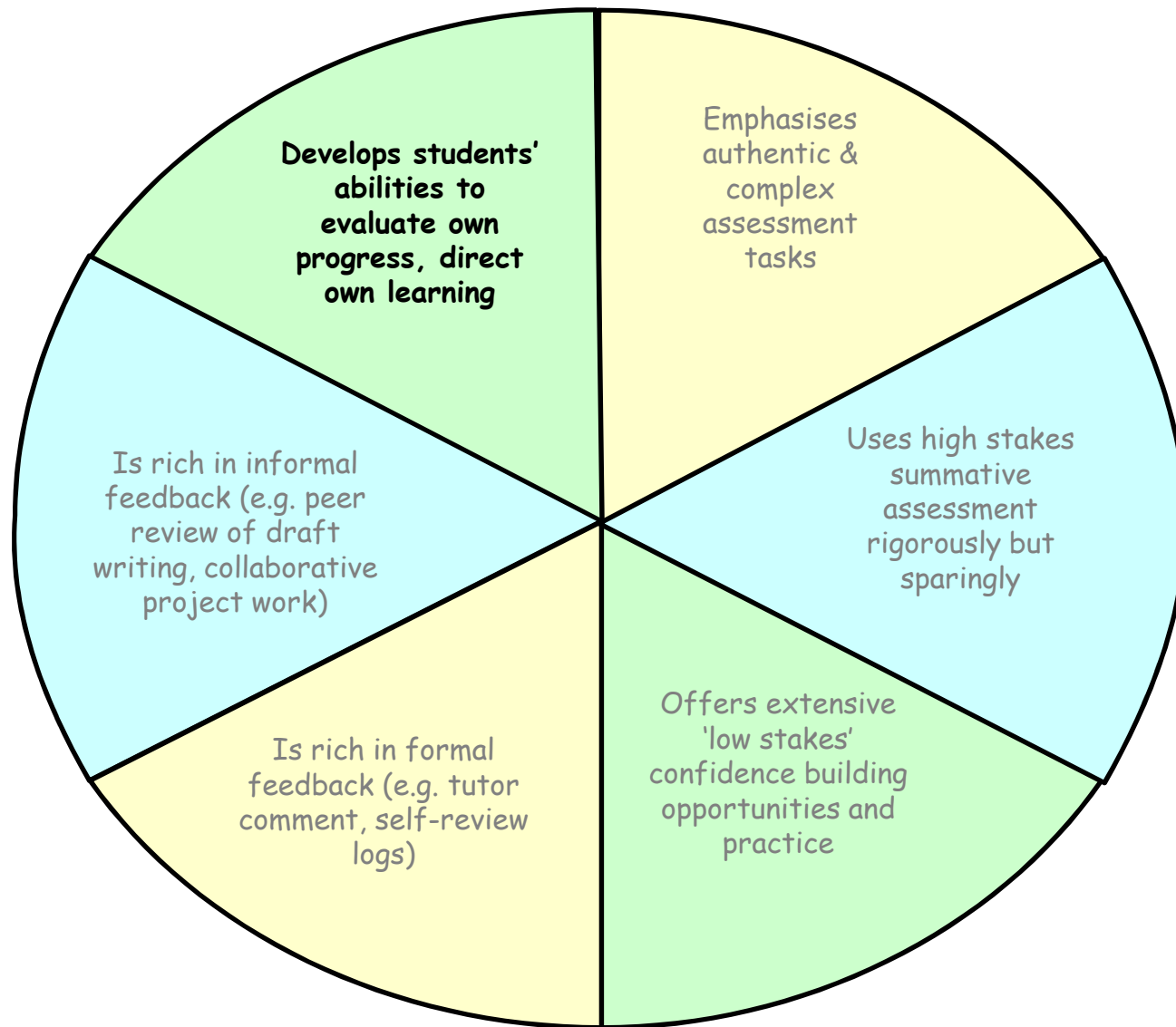
- Students write up parts of practical reports
- Marking with feedback within 2 days
- Whole class feedback
- Follow up on non-submission or low scores



# Staff views

“Our students do pretty well now at report writing!”

“The investment of resources is worth it – even though we now have nearly 200 students!”



Develops students' abilities to  
evaluate own progress, direct  
own learning

For graduates and professionals the most important assessment is self-assessment. Our students should be helped to develop appropriate dispositions, attitudes and skills.

# An associated problem

“I only know what I would put in an essay, or what I think should go in”

# One approach: involving students with assessment criteria

- Formulating criteria exercise (Race, Brown & Smith, 2002) on 'Assessment for Learning' option module.
  - Study guide and reflective commentary
- Students generate own criteria
  - But it became apparent they were focusing exclusively on the guide

# GUIDE

Informative

Gets message across

Fun

Easy to follow — Signposted

Coherent

Links to practice

Useful

Suitable for audience

Visual

Eye catching

# REFLECTIVE COMMENTARY

Explains Reasoning

Creativity/Fun

Demonstrates Understanding

Well Referenced

Links explicitly to Guide

Reflects on Process / Underpinning Philosophy

Links to Practice

# ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Understands AFL concepts

Interpret findings in relation to AFL

Illustrates rationale behind Guide

– Why I've designed it the way I have

Puts theory into practice

– Sense of purpose

Shows creativity

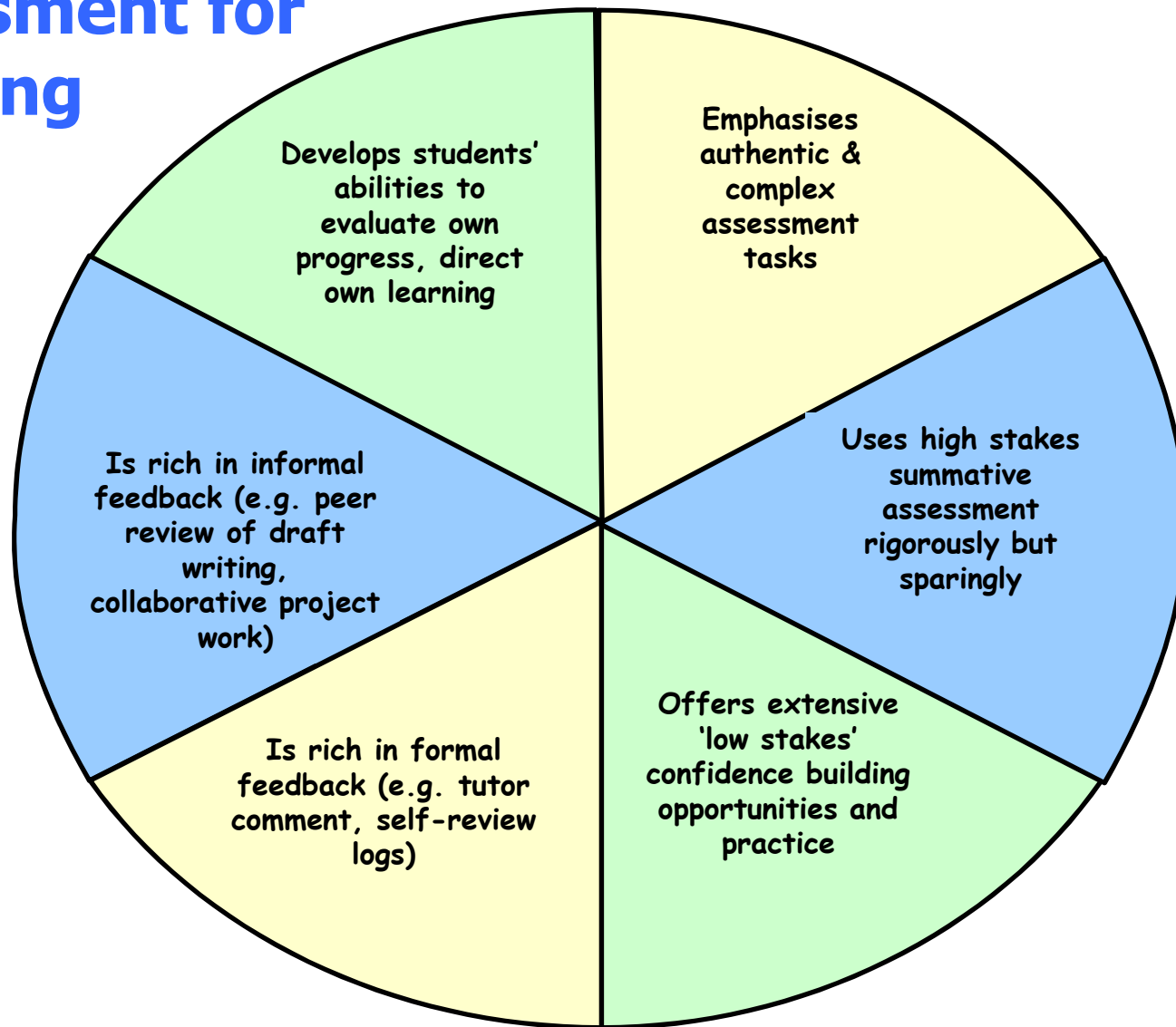
– ~~does what~~ it says it does

in getting message across

– puts message across



# Assessment for Learning



# AfL in your context

Identify in your pairs:

- Challenges or barriers to using AfL

# CETL AfL

[http://northumbria.ac.uk/cetl\\_afl/](http://northumbria.ac.uk/cetl_afl/)